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Man indicted for refusing to assist King investigation

WASHINGTON (UPI) — A federal grand jury Tuesday indicted a Georgia man on a charge of contempt of Congress for his refusal to testify about his reported allegation he was offered $75,000 to assassinate Martin Luther King Jr.

The one-count indictment against Claude Powell Jr., of Decatur, Ga., was returned in Washington, complying with a 367-16 vote by the House to initiate contempt charges against him.

Maximum penalty upon conviction of contempt of Congress is a year in prison and a $1,000 fine.

The indictment said the House assassinations committee and its subcommittee on the King assassination were seeking to check out a report that Powell and his brother, Leon Powell, had claimed they were offered "a large sum of money" in the fall of 1967 or the spring of 1968 to kill King.

On Jan. 20, Powell was subpoenaed to testify before the subcommittee. But when the committee convened Feb. 6, the indictment said, he "did deliberately and intentionally" fail to appear.

Both Powell and his brother have said a friend put them in contact with a man who was identified only as "Ralph" who offered them $75,000 to kill King. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, and James Earl Ray was convicted in the shooting.